

CHOCOLATE TOXICITY IN DOGS

We may want to share our favourite treat with an eager pet but it is best to think twice and reach for the dog biscuits instead.

WHY IS CHOCOLATE BAD?

Sometimes we eat chocolate plain. Sometimes we eat it baked into cakes or mixed into ice cream etc. The first problem with these sweets is the fat. A sudden high fat meal (such as demolishing a bag of chocolate bars left accessible at Halloween time) can create a lethal metabolic disease called "Pancreatitis." Vomiting, diarrhoea, and abdominal pain are just the beginning of this disaster. Remember, in the case of Pancreatitis, it is the fat that causes the problem more than the chocolate itself.

The fat and sugar in the chocolate can create an unpleasant but temporary upset stomach. This is what happens in most chocolate ingestion cases.

Chocolate is, however, directly toxic because of the Theobromine. The more chocolate liquor the more Theobromine is present. This makes baking chocolate the worst, followed by semi-sweet and dark chocolate, followed by milk chocolate, followed by chocolate flavored cakes or cookies. Theobromine causes:

Vomiting & Diarrhoea
Hyperactivity
Tremors
Seizures
Racing heart rhythm progressing to abnormal rhythms
Death in severe cases

Toxic doses of Theobromine are 9mg per pound of dog for mild signs up to 18 mg per pound of dog for severe signs. Milk chocolate contains 44mg/ounce of Theobromine while semi-sweet chocolate contains 150mg/ounce and baking chocolate contains 390 mg/ounce.

It takes nearly 4 days for the effects of chocolate to work its way out of a dog's system. If the chocolate was only just eaten it may be possible to induce vomiting; otherwise hospitalization and support are needed until the chocolate has worked its way out of the system.